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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to compare inexperienced and experienced teachers of both sexes in terms of types of teaching behaviors, reactions to boys and girls, and reactions to different child behaviors, particularly sex-preferred behaviors. Forty teachers, 20 male and 20 female, were observed for 10 hours each during free play periods in preschool classes. Ten teachers of each sex were experienced (with at least 3 years' teaching experience and some formal training in early childhood education), and 10 were inexperienced (with less than 3 years' experience and no early childhood training). Analyses of observation data indicated that: (1) experienced teachers initiated more activities than inexperienced teachers, while inexperienced teachers joined children's play groups more often; (2) experienced teachers of both sexes interacted more with both boys and girls when they were engaged in feminine preferred activities; and (3) inexperienced teachers of both sexes interacted more with boys engaging in masculine-preferred activities and girls engaging in feminine-preferred activities. Differences between male and female teachers were much smaller than differences between experienced and inexperienged teachers. The fact that inexperienced teachers of both sexes were similar to male teachers described in other studies was interpreted as suggesting that some of the results previously attributed to sex of teachers were probably due to differences in amount of experience between male and female. (JMB)

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Preschool Sex Stereotyping: Effect of Sex of Teacher vs. Training of Teacher

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Kendall (1972) suggested that young children were "caught in a feminine world" of mothers, and female teachers. There has been a movement towards hiring male teachers in preschool settings to counterbalance the female influence. Such a change in hiring patterns is predicated on the assumption that male and female teachers do indeed treat children differently, and in particular that male teachers will provide for boys a male role model, and reinforce masculine preferred behaviors.

There is some support for this assumption; for instance, Lee & Wolinsky (1973) found that male and female teachers did differ in their treatment of children in several ways. Male teachers initiated fewer activities, but they did appear to give boys more leadership positions than girls, and related more to male type activities. Etaugh, Collins, and Gerson (1975) in a study with four female and one male teacher found that the male tended to give as many reinforcements for feminine behaviors as did the female teachers, but he gave twice as many reinforcers for the masculine-preferred behaviors than did the female teachers. McCandless, Bush, and Carden (1975) found that female teachers reinforced both sexes for feminine-preferred behaviors 81% of the time, while male teachers reinforced feminine -preferred behaviors 51% of the time and masculine behaviors 49% of the time.

However, there is little indication in any of these studies that teachers of equal training and experience were studied, and in fact in the McCandless, et al. study, the male teachers were high school age boys, while the female teachers were more experienced teachers. Lee & Wolinsky point out in their study that their male teachers were selected for availability and could not be considered a similar sample to the female teachers. Fagot (1975) in a study comparing experienced and inexperienced female teachers found that inexperienced female teachers looked very similar to male teachers in that they reinforced boys for masculine behaviors. However, this appeared to be because they joined ongoing play groups which were engaged in sex-typed play behaviors, while experienced teachers directed children into activities they perceived as school related, which also tended to be feminine preferred.

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The study reported on in this paper was designed to compare inexperienced and experienced teachers of both sexes in terms of types of teaching behaviors, differences in reactions to boys and girls, and reactions to different child behaviors, in particular to sex-preferred behaviors.

Method

Subjects

There were 40 teachers in the present study, 20 were male and 20 female. Ten teachers of each sex were experienced in that they had completed at least three years of teaching experience and had received formal training in some type of teaching program for young children. Ten teachers of each sex had less than three years of teaching experience and had not received training in early childhood education, but had equivalent education in some other area. The inexperienced and inexperienced teachers were matched for age as far as possible, but the male inexperienced teachers were younger than the other groups. All the participants were hired as teachers, not teacher aides.

The children in this study were from three to five years old and attended preschool programs, some of which were of very short duration, i.e. six hours per week, and some of which were included as part of an ongoing day care program. The children came from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, with approximately 95% of them white, and the rest oriental or black. In all classes there tended to be no more than nine children per adult, and the classes were approximately equally divided between the sexes.

Observation Schedule

The observation schedule consists of 15 teacher behaviors(Fagot 1973), and 34 child behaviors (Fagot & Patterson, 1969). The teacher was observed first on teacher behaviors, then the sex of the child was noted, and then the type of child behavior. Table 1 is the observation schedule.

Observers

The observers were two female college students and two male college students. They were trained to use the observation schedule through the use of video tapes plus classroom observation. In order to be counted as reliable, the observers had to give exactly the same code number on each observation. The observers were tested for reliability using video tapes and in the classroom. They agreed over 90% of the time on both the teacher behaviors and the child behaviors. Agreement on the sex of the child was over 98%.

Observation

Each of the 40 teachers was observed for a total of ten hours, once every minute so that there were 600 separate observations on each teacher. Each teacher was observed by at least two of the observers. Observations took place only when the children were engaged in individual activities, and not during group story time, or lunch, or snack times. The teacher was observed once every minute for a 5-10 second interval, and then was coded first on type of teacher behavior, the sex of child/children reacted to, and the kinds of behaviors the child/children are engaged in.

Results

Teacher Behaviors

Fifteen three-way analyses of variance (experience and sex of teacher, with sex of child as a repeated measure) using frequency of occurrence in each category as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 2. Male teachers gave more favorable comments than female teachers ($F=5.65$, df 1/36, $p < .023$), male teachers gave more physical affection ($F= 6.25$, df 1/36, $p < .019$) and male teachers joined childrens play more than female teachers ($F= 6.38$, df 1/36, $p < .016$). There were no other significant differences between male and female teachers.

Nine of the analyses showed significant differences between experienced and inexperienced teachers. Experienced teachers directed children more often ($F=53.1$, df 1/36, $p < .001$), commented favorably more often ($F=12.7$, df 1/36, $p < .001$), responded more often to child's question ($F=16.2$, df 1/36, $p < .001$), asked more questions ($F=12.63$, df 1/36, $p < .001$), gave more information ($F=22.6$, df1/36, $p < .001$) and helped the child/children more often ($F=7.8$, df 1/36, $p < .008$). Inexperienced teachers did not interact as often as experienced teachers ($F= 4.8$, df 1/26, $p < .034$) and inexperienced joined children's play more often ($F= 56.7$, df 1/36, $p < .001$). The only significant interaction between sex and experience of teachers was on the teacher joins category($F= 5.13$, df 1/36, $p < .029$).

Teachers asked more questions of girls and gave more information to girls, while they joined boys more often in play. The sex of the teacher did not make a difference, but experienced teachers were more likely to respond to girls', while inexperienced teachers were more likely to join the play of boys.

Child Behaviors

Fagot(1977) using the same list of child behaviors found eight of the behaviors showing significant differences in preference by boys and girls. Girls preferred to play in the kitchen, to play with dolls, to engage in art activities, and to dress up; while boys preferred to build with blocks, hammer and saw, play with transportation toys, or play outside in the sandbox or mud. These will be considered sex preferred activities.

Teacher behaviors were then judged to be positive teacher variables (teacher directs, comments favorably, responds to child's question, asks questions, gives information, gives verbal or physical comfort, initiates behavior, joins play behavior, sets up activity for the child, and helps the child), negative teacher variables (teacher ignores or criticizes) or non-interaction(not interacting or watching). There were no significant differences in the amount of favorable and unfavorable attention given to either sex of child, however there were differences in the pattern of teachers'responses to the sex preferred behaviors. Teachers did not differ in the amount of negative response , but there was a significant difference in the way that experienced and inexperienced teachers responded positively to sex preferred behaviors. When looking only at sex preferred behaviors, experienced teachers, both male and female, respond overwhelmingly more often to feminine preferred behaviors, no matter whether a boy or a girl is performing the behavior. Inexperienced teachers on the other hand respond to feminine preferred behaviors when the child is a girl and masculine preferred behaviors when the child is a boy($F= 3.68$, df 1/72, $p < .03$). These results

are summarized in Table 3. In looking more closely at the behaviors, it was found that the experienced teachers were reacting to art and other fine motor activities independent of sex and that they directed much of their teaching behavior to this category of child behavior, while inexperienced teachers tended to react to children in all kinds of activities in a more equal fashion.

Discussion

This study confirms findings of other studies (Etaugh et al., 1973, Fagot, 1975, Fagot & Patterson,1969, McCandless et al.,1975) that experienced female teachers tend to reinforce both sexes for feminine preferred activities; however experienced male teachers react in the same way. It appears that this pattern of reinforcement is not determined by the sex of the teacher but by the training and experience of that teacher. Fagot(1975) found that experienced teachers rated very few behaviors in a sex-stereotyped fashion, but they rated many behaviors as task related. There appears to be more overlap between behaviors preferred by girls and task relatedness than behaviors preferred by boys and task-related behaviors. The consequence is that girls are rewarded for preferred behaviors while boys are not.

Male and female teachers do show some differences in teacher behaviors with male teachers appearing more supportive. This may be a function of a greater degree of selection for male teachers. Women may go into teaching of young children without too much thought for it is considered an activity appropriate for them. However the man who decides to work with young children is going into an area not traditionally appropriate for males, so he may be more committed to his work. However, the differences between male and female teachers are much less than the differences between experienced and inexperienced teachers, and the fact that the inexperienced teachers of both sexes are more similar to male teachers of other studies suggests that some of the results previously attributed to sex of teachers were probably a result of differences in amoung of experience between male and female teachers.

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Table 1

Observation List - Teacher- Child Interaction

Teacher List

1. Teacher not interacting with child/children
2. Teacher ignores child
3. Teacher watches child/children
4. Teacher directs or redirects child/children
5. Teacher comments favorably
6. Teacher criticizes
7. Teacher responds to child's question or statement
8. Teacher asks question
9. Teacher gives information
10. Teacher gives verbal comfort
11. Teacher gives physical affection or comfort
12. Teacher initiates activity
13. Teacher joins activity
14. Teacher sets up activity on child's request
15. Teacher gives physical help

Child's Sex

1. Boy
2. Girl
3. Group of boys
4. Group of girls
5. Group of mixed sex

Child Behaviors

1. Painting at easel
2. Cutting, pasting, drawing
3. Playing with clay
4. Play at cornmeal table
5. Play with water, blow bubbles
6. Design boards, puzzles, tinker toys, snakes, flannel boards, marble games
7. String beads
8. Build blocks, set up farms and villiages
9. Hammering and sawing
10. Play toy trucks, planes, boats, trains, tractors
11. Play with steering wheels, dashboards
12. Play in kitchen, large playhouse or extended kitchen activities
13. Play with doll house
14. Play with dolls
15. Dress in like sex costumes
16. Dress in opposite-sex costumes
17. Sing, listen to records, play musical instruments
18. Look at books or listen to story
19. Science table , science observation
20. Play with live animals or toys animals
21. Sit and do nothing, wander, follow teacher around
22. Help teacher
23. Climb or hide in pipes, running, active play
24. Ride trikes, cars, horses, skates, wagons, boats
25. Swing, slide, teeter totter, or bounce on tires
26. Play in outside sandbox, dig in dirt or mud
27. Jump rope
28. Talk with teacher (main activity - no other)
29. Talk with peer (main activity -no other_
30. Throw rocks, hit push
31. Yell, scream, cry, criticize
32. Play ball
33. Eat
34. Grooming behavior: wash hands, change clothes

Table 2

Summary Analyses of Variance: Sex of teacher, experience of teacher repeated measure(sex of child)

Teacher Behavior	Sex of teacher	Experience of teacher	Sex of child
1. Teacher not interacting	not sign.	.034, N > E	
2. Teacher ignores	not sign.	not sign.	not sign.
3. Teacher watches	not sign.	not sign.	not sign.
4. Teacher directs	not sign.	.001, E > N	not sign.
5. Teacher comment favorably	.023, M > F	.001 E > N	not sign.
6. Teacher criticizes	not sign.	not sign.	not sign.
7. Teacher responds to child's question	not sign.	.001 E > N	not sign.
8. Teacher asks question	not sign.	.001 E > N	.001, G > B.
9. Teacher gives information	not sign.	.001 E > N	.001, G > B
10. Teacher gives verbal comfort	not sign.	not sign.	not sign.
11. Teacher gives physical affection	.019 M > F	not sign.	not sign.
12. Teacher initiates	not sign.	not sign.	not sign.
13. Teacher joins	.016, M > F	.001 N > E	.01, B > G
14. Teachers sets up activity on child's request	not sign.	not sign.	not sign.
15. Teacher helps child	not sign.	.008, E > N	not sign.

N = Inexperienced Teacher
E = Experienced Teacher
M = Male Teacher
F = Female Teacher
B = Boy
G = Girl

Table 3

Proportion Favorable Teacher Variables toward Feminine Preferred Activities

	Male Teachers		Female Teachers	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Experienced Teachers	.79	.88	.85	.92
Inexperienced Teachers	.42	.91	.56	.88